

FAQ's About Inlays

What is an Inlay?

An inlay is a dental restoration that covers a fairly small part of the biting surface of a back tooth. It is cemented into place and cannot be taken off.

What materials are in an Inlay?

Inlays are made of two types of materials:

- 1. Porcelain - most like a natural tooth in color*
- 2. Gold Alloy - strongest and most conservative in its preparation*

What are the benefits of having an Inlay?

Inlays restore a tooth to its natural size, shape and - if using porcelain - color. They improve the strength, function and appearance of a broken down tooth that may otherwise be lost.

What are the risks of having an Inlay?

In having an inlay, some inherent risks exist both to the tooth and to the inlay itself.

The risks to the tooth are:

- Preparation for an inlay weakens tooth structure and permanently alters the tooth underneath the inlay*
- Preparing for and placing an inlay can irritate the tooth and cause "post-operative" sensitivity which may last for up to 3 months*
- The tooth underneath the inlay may need root canal treatment less than 1% of the time during the lifetime of the tooth*
- If the cement seal at the edge of the inlay is lost, decay may form at the juncture of the inlay and tooth*

The risks to the inlay are:

- Porcelain may chip and metal may wear over time*
- If the tooth needs a root canal after the inlay is permanently cemented, the procedure may fracture the inlay and the inlay may need to be replaced*

What are the alternatives to Inlays?

- Alternatives to placing an inlay are to either place a crown or a direct restoration such as composite or amalgam filling.*
- Crowns are less conservative in their preparation and therefore weaken remaining tooth structure more than inlays.*
- Composite and amalgam restorations remove decay and may restore teeth to their original form but are limited because they do not improve the long term function and aesthetics of broken down teeth as well as inlays*

How can an existing bite affect an Inlay?

Excessive bite forces may lead to the inlay chipping or breaking

Are there any post treatment limitations once I have an Inlay?

- *Porcelain on an inlay may have a good color match with adjacent natural teeth when the inlay is placed but less of a match as your natural teeth age*
- *An inlay may chip or break if used for abnormal activities (e.g. biting fishing line, sewing thread or finger nails, opening bottles)*